

HCR 28 Testimony from Judi Harris

Good morning, Mr. Chairman and members of the committee. Thank you for the opportunity to testify against HCR 28 today. My name is Judi Harris, I am the Director of Refugee Services for St. Vincent Catholic Charities and I am also a refugee foster parent.

First, I want to mention that the vetting process can be reviewed and modified without halting refugee resettlement. Halting resettlement would result in tremendous harm to people fleeing terror, persecution, and war. A complete description of the intensive screening process can be found on the Department of Homeland Security's official website. And I will add that the required community consultations are held every quarter, government officials are invited and many attend. But I am mostly compelled to testify today because I would really like to provide you with the face of refugee resettlement.

I understand that there is fear of refugees, but if you all could see the people that I resettle you would not have fear, you would be inspired. We have a mantra in my office that says "anyone who doesn't love a refugee is someone who has never met a refugee." So I want to describe just a few of the amazing people we have welcomed.

First, let me tell you about a family from Congo. This family was attacked in their village and their house was burned. And although they already had several children of their own, they found room in their hearts to take on other children left orphaned by the conflict. Even one child with special needs. Here, they continue to dedicate their lives to children – the husband works in the Lansing schools and the wife has her own childcare business in their home.

Or the farmer from Bhutan. He came here with his whole extended family, having fled religious and cultural persecution and having endured more than 20 years in a refugee camp. After years of working second shift at a local manufacturing company, he earned enough to finally buy a house and land which he quickly turned into a sprawling farm. When you visit him, he will tell you, enthusiastically, that he loves the USA, he appreciates the opportunity to work hard and to get rich and that

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Or our dear single mother from Iraq, who was persecuted because she worked for the US embassy in Baghdad. She recently started her own business and is putting her children through university. Her oldest son, having graduated from MSU, is now in Medical school.

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And my youngest son who fled here from the Taliban in Afghanistan. He is currently in his third year at Western Michigan where he is studying business. He will be incredibly successful someday. He became a citizen last spring and I guarantee you, no one on earth loves the USA more than he does. If refugee resettlement were halted as is proposed by HCR 28, people like these may not be in our lives.

So, obviously I am a person who is passionate and committed to serving vulnerable people, especially refugees. But I would like you all to also know that I, like many of the people I have helped to resettle, am a patriotic American, and I want nothing more than to live my life in peace and prosperity. And I support refugee resettlement because it is safe, successful and beneficial to our country, to our communities and to our families.

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